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ABSTRACT

A comparative analysis of the findings of three studies involving widely varying ethnic groupings of rural youth was conducted in order to evolve a speculative frame of propositions about religion as a variable attribute of the life situation of rural youth, and to speculate about the possible significance of patterned variability in religious orientation and organization as an attribute of rural communities relative to its impact on the youth's self-defined interests and values. Representing New Mexico Spanish Americans, Ohio Mennonite-Amish, and Texas Mexican Americans, Blacks, and Anglos, and at least three cultural regions of the U.S. (South, Northeast, and Southwest), the studies did not focus on religious phenomena per se; however, each involved, as a part of other primary objectives, recording of observations on youth's religious behavior and orientations. All variable aspects of religion as it related to rural youth's orientations, behavior, and social contexts and which were included in any of the three studies were listed. Then a brief notational conclusion about what was found in reference to each study was given. It was concluded that religion will vary in its significance for the individuals included. At the same time, to the extent that religion varies as a social institution in the sociocultural context of a locality or a social area (consisting of similar local communities), it can have a patterned variability in significance for and impact on youth as a whole. (NQ)

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THE VARIABLE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION AMONG ETHNIC TYPES OF RURAL YOUTH IN THE U.S.: A SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS*

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, I want to share with my fellow researchers and colleagues some findings, ideas, and speculations I have evolved from several recent studies about religion as an aspect or dimension of the life-experience of diverse sets of rural youth. In this sense the paper is an initial attempt at synthesizing my research and ideas in this regard. Secondly, it is my intention to awaken an interest in others to explore more thoroughly and explicitly the impacts of religion on the social organization of the life situation of rural youth. We, rural sociologists and other sociologists, have generally over-looked this dimension of the life experience of young people as is clearly evidenced by the paucity of published research on the subject. It is seldom that one finds current research reporting on the religious attributes of youth, particularly rural, minority youth. A review of the relevant literature supporting this assertion has been published recently (Kuvlesky, STJRH, 1978). A good illustration of this point can be found in one of the dominant areas of research activity of Rural Sociologists - status projections of youth.

Of the hundreds of research reports that have been published or presented in the last ten years on the status aspirations and the status attainment process of rural youth, to my knowledge few involve variables pertaining to religion in any but the most superficial manner (i.e,, church affiliation). Personally, I feel this paucity of interest is based on a widespread assumption that religion, in general, doesn't make much difference as an explanatory or conditioning variable for the things (variables) most of us are interested in.

Honesty compels me to admit that I, as a research sociologist, shared this assumption until very recently. A year ago, during a "study leave",

I had the opportunity to do some intensive field observation oriented toward case studies of two small populations of rural young people in rather different geographical and cultural settings: Spanish Americans in Northern Taos County, New Mexico and Amish and Mennonite youth in Eastern Holmes County, Ohio (Kuvlesky, 1977; Kuvlesky, SSA paper, 1978). What I observed about the life situations of these two groups of youth caused me to seriously reflect about the apparent but unsopken, implicit assumption that religious attributes are not very fruitful for social science research. I came away from my intensive field experiences with a very definite feeling that religion and "the church," in their presence or absence, had a considerable significance for the life situations of the two sets of youth I observed. How is religion woven into the life situations of other rural youth; those from different areas, and of different ethnic origins? The results of my Taos Co. and Holmes Co. observations led me to selectively reanalyze data I had collected in Texas on rural Black, Mexican American, and "Anglo" adolescents to see whether or not I could begin to answer this question (Kuvlesky, STJRH, 1978).

None of these three studies focused on religious phenomena per se; however, each involved, as a part of other primary objectives, recording of observations on youth's religious behavior and orientations. Viewing these three field studies together, a wide range of specific ethnic groups are represented (N.M. Spanish Americans, Texas Mexican Americans, Texas Blacks, Texas "Anglos", and Ohio Mennonite-Amish) and at least three cultural regions of the U.S. are also represented (South, Northeast, and Southwest). The extreme variability in sociocultural life contexts of youth implicit in the ethnic group and regional variations surely offers a potential to capture a wide range of the probable variability existing among rural youth in the U.S.

My intention in this effort is to synthesize disparate sets of findings about these widely varying ethnic groupings of rural youth in order to evolve

a speculative frame of propositions about religion as a variable attribute of the life situation of rural youth. Also, I want to speculate about the possible significance of patterned variability in religious orientation and organization as an attribute of rural communities relative to its impact on the self defined interests and values of youth. I caution the reader that what I am attempting to produce is not to be viewed as a set of truth statements, but rather empirically grounded or rooted, plausable propositions that will require rigorous scrutiny in future research.

Few are foolish enough to try to synthesize reports of findings, evolving from differing methodologies ("ethnomethodology" vs. "normal survey") and representing varying partial understandings of the social reality being examined. However, I deem the risk of being labeled "foolish" a small price to pay for getting your attention and, perhaps, stimulating your motivation to check-out the significance of religious variables in your subsequent work. My research experiences lead me to the proposition that for rural places and rural young people of all types religion has socially significant consequences: It is likely to make a difference in the social life, daily behavior, and social orientations of rural youth.

ETHNICITY, RURALITY AND RELIGION

The strong nomethetic tendencies inherent in the scientific orientation of most sociologists often leads them to present general characterizations of inclusive groupings of people that is overly-simple (but, aesthetically attractive in the sense of being parsimonious). As a consequence often significant and sometimes dramatic, intraclass variability is ignored. Rural sociologists in their never-ending quest to discover rural-urban differences clearly fit this general pattern. The result is that we tend to over-generalize too often and begin developing a notion of "rurality" as a relatively homogeneous set of attributes either different from or similar to the "urban" set.[1] This is a relatively easy trap to fall into when one assumes we are dealing with relatively homogeneous population categories. However, this problem soon becomes explicit to researchers when they begin combining an interest in comparative ethnic studies with comparable rural-urban investigation: often enough ethnic variability is more significant than rural-urban differences. Perhaps, of greater significance in this regard is that intraclass variability (i.e., rural and urban) is almost always more impressive than interclass variability.[2] Why should this be the case so often? Could it be that the normal comparative or control variables we select to employ do not have high explanatory significance as compared with others we do not choose to employ or that our theories or hunches have not yet led us to employ? Could religion as an attribute of community, of interaction networks, of value sets, or of personalities be one of these "ignored" but possibly fruitful explanatory variables? My hunch is that this is in fact the case.

What is true for those things we label rural I feel is also true for those things we differentiate as ethnic entities.[3] My concern here is that

we take care not to reify our conceptions of group differences. To what extent ethnic entities or rural places are or are not homogeneous is an empirical question. Furthermore, my research has most often indicated that an assumption of relative homogeneity in either respect is usually unwarranted. I think the findings I am about to describe will illustrate this point very clearly.

As we move into a discussion of variability in religious phenomena exhibited among rural youth, I think we can fall into the trap described above in another way -- by assuming that differences in religious identification (church denominations) are associated with differences in religious behavior and orientation. Often, the only religious variable that is involved in youth studies (if any are) is religious identification.[4] Yet, it is problematic whether or not this variable has high predictive capability for religious behavior or orientations. Perhaps, this analysis will provide some insights in this regard, at least, for rural youth.

SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

In terms of the actual historical sequence involved in producing the three sets of findings to be integrated the Taos Co. study came first, followed immediately by the Holmes Co. study, and then the selective re-analysis of the Texas data gathered in 1972 and 1973. However, because the Texas data is more specific and well ordered I would like to overview it first, then describe the relevant findings from the two "interpretive analyses", and finally attempt to provide a comparative synthesis. In reference to each of these three studies I will not describe the study areas or populations and the observation techniques and measurements as these are available in earlier reports cited previously. I have summarized in a comparative manner some of the key attributes of these three separate studies of rural, nonmetropolitan youth in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Three Youth Studies: Comparative Overview

Attribute Of Study	Texas Youth Study	Taos Co., N. M. Study	Holmes Co., Ohio Study
Ethnic Types of Youth	Mex. Amers. (S. T.) Blacks (E. T.) White	Spanish Americans	White (Mennonite and "Conservative")
Date of Study	1973 (S. T.) 1972 (E. T.)	1977	1977
Observational Techniques	Survey: group-administered questionnaires	Personal Interviews Key Informants Direct Observations	Personal Interviews Key Informants Direct Observations
Type of Analysis	Statistical	Interpretive	Interpretive
Subjects	H. S. Sophomores Rural, N.M. Predominantly Low-Income	Age: Variable Rural, N.M. Predominantly Low-Income	Age: Variable Rural, N.M. Variable SES

THE TEXAS SURVEY: A TRI-ETHNIC COMPARISON

(1972-73)

The data were collected from high school sophomores as a result of two separate but highly coordinated field efforts as follows: nonmetropolitan, East Texas Black and White youth, Spring of 1972; and nonmetropolitan, South Texas Mexican-American youth, Spring of 1973. Detailed descriptions of the study areas and respondents are available in Kuvlesky and Edington (1976). The high level of comparability of the data, historical period of study, and study areas provides us with the best opportunity that has existed to investigate broadly inter-ethnic variability in religious involvement and orientations of rural youth.

While this study predominantly focused on orientations toward social mobility, it included several scattered indicators of religious participation and orientations: enough to make it worthwhile to pull them together within a common focus for analysis. My general objective was to see what my Texas Youth Study data could tell me about the religious behavior and orientations of rural youth and how these might vary by ethnic origins. The data set provided indicators for the following religious variables:

A. Religious Participation

   1. Religious Affiliation

   2. Church Participation of Subjects

B. Religious Orientations

   1. Religious Self-Image (Perceptions of how peers view the subject in this regard)

   2. Religious Identification as an Impediment to Social Attainment (Perception)

   3. Importance of Religion in Selection of Future Spouse (Relative to matching subject's religious identification)

C. Parent's Church Participation

1. Mother's

2. Father's

The analysis of the data produced a host of noteworthy findings pertaining to both interethnic differences among the Texas rural youth studies and, at the same time, some consistently similar patterns of religious attributes. A summary overview of the results of the statistical tests used to evaluate interethnic variability by sex on the respondents' religious attributes is presented in Table 2. This is followed by a summary overview of interethnic patterns of difference in selected response categories and a description of the nature and strength of interethnic patterns of variability relative to the rural youths' religious involvements, participation, and orientations presented in Table 3.

Interethnic Differences

1. Religious Affiliation:

   The three ethnic groupings differed markedly in church affiliation: Mexican-American youth were predominantly Roman Catholic, Black youth were predominantly Baptist, and White youth demonstrated a greater diversity of church affiliation than either of the two minority ethnic units.

2. Church Participation by Youth:

   Black youth, regardless of gender, were more frequent participants in religious services than others. Black girls had the highest rates of church participation and Mexican-American boys had the lowest by far.

3. Orientations Toward Religion:

(a) Religious Self-Image - Ethnic differences were not substantial; however, Black girls had a greater tendency to perceive themselves as being viewed as a more religious person than others.

(b) Religion as an Impediment to Status Attainment - Black youth more frequently viewed religion as an impediment than White youth. (No information existed on Mexican-American youth for this variable).

(c) Importance of Religion of Future Spouse - Mexican-American youth, particularly among boys, were slightly more likely than others to consider religion as an important attribute of their future spouse.

4. Parents' Church Attendance:

Ethnic group differences were significant in reference to both fathers' and mothers' patterns of frequency of church attendance. The patterns were the same for both parents but the ethnic variability was more substantial for fathers. The general, important parental patterns of difference observed are as follows:

(1) Black parents more often attend frequently.

(2) Mexican-American parents are least likely to attend frequently.

(3) White parents fall between these two extremes but are more similar to Mexican-Americans than Blacks.

Extension of this line of analysis by contrasting mothers' and fathers' patterns (parental difference) and by comparing sex-matched parent-child profiles of patterns of attendance did not reveal any marked or consistent ethnic differences.

Ethnic Commonalities

Given the interethnic variability among the rural youth described above, a number of strong, consistent patterns were also observed to cut across ethnic groupings. In the following important ways the three ethnic groupings were observed to demonstrate strong and consistent similarities.

1. Religious Affiliation - few youth lacked a particular religious affiliation or, conversely, almost all of these rural youth gave a religious identification.
2. Church Participation of Youth - for each ethnic type boys were less frequent participants than their female counterparts.
3. In reference to religious self-image and importance of religion of future spouse each ethnic group was polarized into two substantial opposing sub-groups.
4. Religion as an Impediment to Status Attainment - most Black and White youth did not perceive religion as an impediment.
5. Parents' Church Participation -
   (a) Fathers are much less frequent church attenders than mothers.
   (b) When parent and child participation profiles are matched by gender, children show markedly greater frequency of attendance than parents.
6. SES and Ethnic Patterns

   Generally, SES does not influence substantially either interethnic variability of religious attributes or intraethnic patterns.

Discussion of Texas Findings

There is no question that the three ethnic groupings of youth studied here differed markedly in their religious affiliations. But, given this dramatic difference, interethnic variability in the youths' church

participation and religious orientations is uneven, varying in magnitude greatly. Certainly some of these patterns, particularly in reference to frequency of participation, are substantial enough to deserve attention. Still, it seems clear that ethnic differences, and associated variability in religious identification or church affiliation, do not consistently and strongly influence to a great extent patterns of religious behavior or religious orientations of youth - at least within the limits of the context of variables available in this study.

One can see from a comparison of the correlation measures ($\overline{C}$) and my interpretive judgements of "Magnitude of (Ethnic) Differences" presented in Table 3 that there is a consistent progression evidenced in interethnic variability which cuts across gender as follows:

Variable Type	Ethnic Difference	Progression
Identification (Church)	Marked	+
Participation	Moderate	↓
Orientation	Slight	-

Clearly then the varying religious identification linked to ethnicity does not produce similar marked patterns of variation in church participation and certainly not in religious valuation and orientations. Regardless of ethnicity and type of church, rural youth are similar in the variability they demonstrate in reference to church participation and religious orientations.

Much more impressive than the interethnic differences observed was the large number of rather strong and very consistent patterns of similarity observed in reference to religious orientations and sex-role and age-status differentiation relative to church participation. Clearly rural youth share a number of similar patterns in these respects, irrespective of substantial

and significant ethnic group differentiation, including minority ethnic vs. dominant ethnic group distinctions. In this sense, the findings strongly suggest that in general Black and Mexican-American minority youth are to a large extent "culturally assimilated" into the dominant religious patterns of the dominant culture. Except for religious affiliation, these two rural minority ethnic units are more like the dominant ethnic unit (i.e., White) than they are different from it.

It would seem that the greatest influence of ethnic identification was in reference to defining membership in particular churches. Yet, membership in different churches did not seem to have a great deal of impact on religious participation or orientations. This seriously brings into question the common notion in sociology that religious identification (by church) is generally a significant element in ethnic subcultural differentiation in contemporary American society (Greeley, 1974; Chpt. 7). This may be true in some cases (i.e., the Old Order Amish); however, it does not appear to be so, to a very great extent, for rural Texas Blacks and Mexican-Americans.

The strong, sex-role patterning observed frequently, particularly in reference to religious participation (for youth and parents), cut very consistently across ethnic group lines. In other words, gender (sex-roles) does not make a significant difference in religious behavior and orientations.

Table 2. A Summary Comparison of Significance of Ethnic Differences Among Black, White, and Mexican American Rural Youth by Sex

	Significance of Ethnic Differences			
	Males		Females	
Variable	$P(X^2)$	$\bar{C}$	$P(X^2)$	$\bar{C}$
Rel. Identif.	<.001	.80	<.001	.83
Freq. of Church Attend.	<.001	.35	<.001	.31
Viewed as Rel. Person	>.50	---	<.05	.20
Rel. as Imped. to Attain.*	<.01	.29	<.02	.27
Impt. of Rel. of Future Spouse	<.02	.25	<.01	.31
Mother's Church Attend.	.05<P<.10	.25	<.001	.57
Father's Church Attend.	<.001	.33	<.001	.42

* Mexican American sample is excluded here.

Table 3. Summary Overview of Interethnic Variability in Texas Rural Youths' Religious Identification, Participation, and Orientations by Sex

	Ethnic Groups			Ethnic Differences			
	Bl. %	Wh. %	M.A. %	P at .05	C*	Nature of Difs.	Magn. of Dif.
A. MALES							
Religion Variables							
Identification							
Catholic	0	14	83	S	.80	MA>W>B	Very Large
Baptist	67	47	0			B>W>MA	
Participation							
Frequent Attend.	52	49	36	S	.35	B>W>MA	Marked
Seldom Attend.	23	31	51			B<W<MA	
Orientations							
Viewed as Religious	52	42	51	NS	---	None	None
Rel. Impedes Attain.	21	9	--	S	.29	B>W	Moderate
Impt. of Rel/Future Spouse	50	43	58	S	.25	MA>B>W	Slight
B. FEMALES							
Religion Variables							
Identification							
Catholic	0	12	85	S	.83	MA>W>B	Very Large
Baptist	77	40	0			B>W>MA	
Participation							
Frequent Attend.	75	57	61	S	.31	B>MA, W	Moderate
Seldom Attend.	7	21	17			B<W, MA	Moderate
Orientations							
Viewed as Religious	53	59	71	S	.20	MA>W>B	Slight
Rel. Impedes Attain.	15	5	--	S	.27	B>W	Moderate
Impt. of Rel/Future Spouse	43	44	54	S	.31	MA>W, B	Slight

* Corrected Coefficient of Contingency (Champion, 1970: pp. 204-207)

THE TAOS CO. AND HOLMES CO. STUDIES: OVERVIEW[5]

I approached both study areas with no explicit preparation for entry; in fact, I had not even selected targeted communities within which to concentrate my attention for observations. This fit my desire for an open, personal research adventure - one that would test fully my capabilities to escape the survey syndrome. In each case I spent a total of about 2 weeks actually living in each study area with one of my sons. Most of this time was spent in general, open observation of social activity and in carrying out in-depth personal interviews.

In Taos County I intensively interviewed a total of ten Spanish Americans and utilized a number of key informants (Spanish American and Anglo). The age of those interviewed ranged from about 50 to 15; six of these were young people of whom 3 were girls. In Holmes County the number of interviews and the attributes of the interviewees were similar.

I carried out the personal interviews in a conversational manner, utilizing no observable guides and taking no notes during the contact period. Obviously, the interviews were structured in some respect - in terms of topics to be covered - but, they were also very loose and open, allowing for free movements of topics discussed. Each day I recorded the conversations from recall as exactly as I could. At all times I tried to record in great detail all social activity I observed during the entire stay in the study area.

I think these operations worked well for me and were productive among the Spanish Americans of Taos County and the "High People" of Holmes Co. On the other hand, they didn't work as well among the Old Order Amish of Holmes Co. - their sense of boundary maintenance made them reluctant to give information about their communities. One should not misunderstand; I was treated warmly by most Amish I met and developed friendships of significance with several;

however, it was difficult to get information from them about themselves. In particular, we were not permitted to interact at all with Amish females beyond puberty age.

Even though the Eastern Holmes County population I ended up focusing on could not be said to be ethnically homogeneous in a strict sense, the youth studied do share a common ethnic heritage - all come from family backgrounds that were at one time Mennonite or Amish. Moreover, the families of these youth were active members of what are locally called "Conservative Churches" - often these are small, sect-type entities closely resembling Mennonites, or, are in fact Mennonite.

As was the case with the Texas study, religious phenomena were not the primary focus of these two field studies. Religion, however, entered in as a relevant aspect of my general objective, which was to gain insight about the ways in which the life situations of rural youth were socially organized. Consequently, I did not have the time to explore church organization or activity as much as I would have liked to in either of these two study areas. What I learned about religious phenomena came from observations for the most part outside the operating context of such organizational activity.

Northern Taos County, N. M. - Findings

I selected three particular villages to concentrate my attention on: Arroyo Hondo, San Cristobal and Valdez. The three communities were similar in a number of respects. All were old residence areas, first settled perhaps 200 years ago. They were predominantly Spanish American - no more than a handful of Anglo families lived in the two smaller places and they were of very recent vintage (in-migrants during the past decade). None had a complete school system, and only Arroyo Hondo had any school at all, an elementary

school. The children from all three towns traveled to Taos for high school education. None had a resident priest; although each had a church that the village maintained. In each case, the priest from Arroyo Seco visited the church once a week for about an hour to say Mass - and, also on major holidays (i.e., Easter and Christmas).

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of my observations was the lack of the young people's involvement in the "Church". Prior to my visit I had assumed that traditionally the Spanish Americans of northen New Mexico were very religious and active participants in the Roman Catholic Church. With one exception, the young people neither attended church regularly nor considered themselves particularly religious. It was generally understood that, "Only the older people go to Mass."

It seams quite clear to me that there is a great divergence between the older residents and the young in this regard. Most of the older adults attend Mass regularly and probably consider themselves more than ordinarily religious. The young people are different. Yet, as far as I could tell this wasn't an issue of conflict between parents and children. I got the definite feeling that the parent's participation and sentiments were more acts of homage to a valued past than a sign of sincere, actual religious commitment. The usually empty, lifeless church buildings and the presence of the priest in Arroyo Seco were constant reminders that the church had left the villages.

Clearly, the church did not provide an important dimension of social involvement for these young people. The removal of the village church and priest as a continuing daily presence no doubt go a long way in explaining the present lack of local, village-wide organization and the "atomized" atmosphere of the family units there. The resentment toward these changes still lingers and is evidenced in the villagers hostility toward the village ("A.S.") where the centralized church is now located and the "circuit-rider" priest resides. A

new priest had moved in several weeks before I entered the study area. I repeatedly asked my key informants (young and old) his name - none of them knew it.

Most of us believe that one of the major social functions of the church is to instill a strong sense of moral values in young people and to help control behavior in this regard. Consequently, it might be appropriate to examine the pattern of "moral" behavior of these youth. Both alcohol and "pot" were easily attainable and most youth used both from a relatively early age. One of my adult informants estimated that 85% of all youth (teenagers) used pot. My interviews with the youth themselves strongly supported his assertion. Hard drugs were used only by a few and the young people showed strong disapproval of them. My general impression was that though use of "pot" was widespread, it was not used on a heavy daily basis by most. The consumption of alcohol was a more serious problem in this regard. Most youth indicated that there wasn't any heavy sex coming down at the "field parties", only on a one-to-one basis. Several adults had indicated to me that there was a serious problem with young, teenage pregnancies in one village. Here's what one of these said, "I don't mean one or two girls, I mean many! This is a serious problem. They watch TV and think they can do anything they want. The parents can't control them or don't care." Going back to one of the girls in this village I asked again if this was a serious problem. She agreed it might be - "Some of the parents don't seem to care." She indicated to me that few girls were told about contraceptives - "usually they don't talk about such things." She told me that once a man had come to the high school to discuss such things with the girls. While she thought this was good and enjoyed it, many girls disliked it and many parents protested. So, it's not done anymore. Yet, some of the kids will still "fool around" - and some young girls will get "in trouble."

Where is the church? Does it have a role to play in helping these youth? Certainly the young people don't perceive or relate to it in this regard.

Holmes County Study - Findings

Located some sixty miles southwest of Akron, and just outside of the highly industrialized zone of northeast Ohio, are the rolling hills of Holmes County. The county is essentially split in half ethnically. The eastern half is populated predominantly by Mennonite, Old Order Amish, and other conservatively oriented religious groups. The county is rural, predominantly agricultural, and has little in the way of industry.

I selected several locations for concentrated attention within the study area. One was a place appropriately named Charm, and its surrounding hinterland - a village of about 40 homes. This community is predominantly Old Order Amish and Conservative Mennonite in population. Berlin, a market center for the farm people in the area and a tourist trap for outsiders, was also selected. It is a town of about 800 people, the majority of whom I am sure could trace their heritage back to the "Plain Folk." This town has a number of stores, several restaurants, and a complete school system (through high school). One way both of these communities differed from those studied in Taos County was that neither had a bar: a significant difference from the perspectives of most of the youth I talked with.

The most dramatic difference between the organization of the life situation of Holmes County and Taos County youth existed in reference to religious orientations and church participation. Whereas most of the Taos County youth did not view themselves as particularly religious and did not attend church regularly, the opposite was true of the youth observed in Holmes County. Only one youth interviewed in the Holmes County area indicated a lack of religious

valuation; and this was coupled with strong negative feelings about organized religion and church-goers. All the rest indicated frequent (usually weekly) attendance at church and a tendency to view themselves as sincerely religious. This general pattern, considered together with the one extreme exception, clearly indicates the pervasive importance of religion and church in Holmes County.

Churches were obviously focal points of community activity even in the smaller towns: they were numerous, well kept, and filled with social activity several times a week. This is quite a contrast to what was observed in Taos County. The generational split on church participation observed in the Taos County villages apparently does not exist here.

I would be presenting less than an honest and total picture of the Holmes County situation if I did not call attention to my perception that youth viewed the importance of religion in their life circumstances dualistically - as having good and bad consequences for them. There was no question they resented the restrictions in school activities (dances) and community organizations (access to beer and dancing) that severly limited their opportunities for leisure and which they attributed to the influence of churches and religious leaders. I sensed a general concern with a heavy, restrictive moralistic climate that they perceived to prevail around them. Over and over again they indicated patterned attempts to escape this smothering element by riding down to Sugar Creek or Baltic to drink, dance, see a movie, or just ride around "raising hell".

I have intentionally excluded the Amish youth from the general picture drawn above: this is due to the fact that I personally interviewed only one Amish boy. Obviously, however, religious orientations among Amish youth would be strong and the nature of the orientation (+ or -) would essentially determine whether or not these youth would remain Amish. I picked up a lot

of pieces of information that would lead me to believe that the Amish community had a relatively high attrition rate among its older youth; however, exactly how high I am not able to say. Still, even the ex-Amish I met and interviewed had strong feelings of religiosity and were active church participants.

I think the heavy atmosphere of religiosity existing in eastern Holmes Co. fostered a narrow, conservative set of moral norms and extreme sanctioning that frustrated many of the interests of the local young people in Holmes County and contributed to their desire to get out of their local communities. At the same time, it did provide them with a definite organizational nexus for structured peer associations and adult-youth relationships on a community-wide basis that apparently did not exist in Taos County.

Unlike the Taos Co. situation, racial and locality distinctions did not provide a basis for social differentiation and identity. In Eastern Holmes Co. religion, and derivatively church based, ethnic identity (i.e., "Amish" and "High People") were the basis for the most important social boundaries and intergroup hostilities. Perhaps these quotes of my subjects will illustrate this:

(1) "I like this country; it's beautiful - but not the people. They go to church on Sunday and they screw you over the rest of the week. They won't do nothing for you - they wouldn't give you half a sandwich if you were starving."

(2) "People around here are too snobbish - they will ignore you if you drink or do something you shouldn't." He wants to live in a big city - maybe California.

(3) "A lot of people here are snobs. They are always minding your business, but sometimes you see them and they don't even talk to you."

Many of the non-Amish young people dislike the Amish as illustrated by the following excerpts from an interview with a sixteen year old boy:

> 'We don't have proms -- we have banquets instead." He told me the Amish are to blame. (He said nothing about his Amish heritage though.) "How do you get along with them?" I asked. "Pretty good most of the time -- except when they're drunk." I asked if there are ever any fights between the Amish and Non-Amish. He said yes and then added, "I fought one." I asked why. "Because he was drunk and wanted to fight."

Here's an excerpt from a conversation with another boy several years older:

> "I get along with them (Amish) -- I was brought up in the middle of them. I used to help them with farm work. Sometimes they'd invite me to their parties." I asked if these were drinking parties. "Yes," he said, apparently surprised that I would ask. Apparently young men (sometimes older ones too) will gather and drink at somebody's home while the rest of the family is traveling over a weekend or so. They usually will not permit non-Amish to stay at these "parties." He does say sometimes he has had problems with them -- "the men, over girls." "It's hard to meet Amish girls," he added.

Clearly the religious beliefs and moral norms permeated all aspects of life in Eastern Holmes Co. These appeared to influence not only age-peer associations but, also, the general nature of adult-adolescent relationships.

The "High People" youth of Holmes County appear to experience more frequent and intense parental-child and even intersib stress and conflict than was observed to be the case in Taos County. It was my judgment that one of the strong motives generally underlying the almost universal desire of Holmes County youth to eventually "get out" of the local community was to escape negative family experiences. From what the youth told me and from what I observed directly, I got the definite impression that parents were extreme in attempting to enforce rigid moral and social norms and that they were not beyond using younger sibs systematically as "watch dogs" for older ones. This situation seemed to be particularly oppressive for females - at least, they perceived this to be the case.

Religion was an ever present aspect of life for Eastern Holmes Co. youth: it supported a spiderweb of rigid moral norms that reached into every aspect of community and personal life. All aspects of life and living that youth

cared for most seemed to be outside of their control. Rigid deadlines, particularly for girls, are common and resented. Shunning (isolating) people labeled as immoral appears to be a rule. One girl told me her best friend had "gotten into trouble" - became pregnant. Nobody in town would have anything to do with her. The informant's parents forbid her to even visit this friend; although, she confided to me that she did so anyway. At the same time it appeared to me that the youth of Holmes County were not experiencing as much of a problem in widespread and excessive use of alcohol as the Taos County youth. Almost all youth I talked to in Holmes County had tried both alcohol and pot but few were heavy regular users and it appeared that relatively few used "heavy stuff." From what I learned I would say that youth in Holmes County found it much more difficult to obtain both alcohol (before they were 18) and drugs than their counterparts in Taos County. However, this is off-set by the fact that more of the Holmes Co. youth had "wheels".

I probed rather extensively in the area of patterns of sexual behavior and found those in Holmes County to be similar to what was observed in Taos County. Here's some of the things one of my respondents had to say about this subject:

> Girl -17: What do you do on dates? "Go to a movie or bowl in Sugar Creek or Dover." I asked if the kids around here do much parking. She said, "No." I really didn't believe her -- she didn't say "no" very convincingly. So I probed. Eventually she admitted that some do -- but she doesn't approve of it. I asked if kids around here get into sex pretty heavy and she said they don't. A few girls get into "trouble" -- she has a good friend who is pregnant and unmarried. I asked how people treat her friend. "Pretty bad. I'm not supposed to even talk to her -- but I do." I said, "Are your parents afraid of you hurting your reputation by being around her?" She replied, "Yes, that's it exactly." "How do you find out about contraceptive devices, the pill - sex?" I asked. "From the older girls." She continued, "You don't even talk about sex around here -- not with older people." She indicated that they have no sex education in the schools and certainly not in church. She went on to say that there is not even a place to dance around here.

COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

Abstracting the observations relevant to religious considerations out of the three separate studies involved was relatively easy. However, because none of them were originally designed to foucs on religious phenomena per se and because they represent two dramatically different sociological methodologies it was a significant challenge to attempt a comparison of the findings. I decided that the best way to carry out this comparative objective was to list out all variable aspects of religion as it relates to rural youth's orientations, behavior, and social contexts and which were included in any of the three studies and then to represent a brief notational conclusion about what was found in reference to each study. This procedure and its results are described in Table 4.

A quick overview of the information summarized in Table 4 will clearly show the lack of perfect congruence between the "ethnomethodological" field studies and the Texas youth survey. For the most part, we are capable of making comparisons across all variables for which indicators were available in the survey.[6] On the other hand, the survey can not provide information to compare with the "interpretive" understandings available on "Impact of Religion" from the more wholistic Taos Co. and Holmes Co. field studies.

I would like to caution the reader that the abstract, general conclusions in Table 4 represent predominant tendencies or dominant patterns: they are not absolute, universal statements about reality. For instance, there are a relatively small number of Taos Co. youth who are not Roman Catholic and a substantial minority of East Texas, Black youth are not Baptist. In addition, moving to this level of abstraction in stating findings necessarily leaves behind a number of important intraclass variations (i.e., gender differences) and also ignores some of the more specific aspects of interclass variability

(i.e., ethnic differentials among Texas youth). Unfortunately it is impossible to generalize without paying these costs of abstraction. One can off-set these disadvantages by going back to the detailed discussion of the findings given previously.

Perhaps, the most significant general finding observable from the comparative summary is that incredible diversity exists among the five different youth populations studied on just about every religious variable examined. In other words, it can be boldly stated, without fear of refutation, that no simple generalization can be made about the nature of religious involvements and orientations of all rural youth in the U.S. Although we have only two study populations to compare on the "Impact of Religion on Youth's Community Life" -- and these are interpretive -- the polar opposite patterns noted between the two sets of findings indicate the possibility that a similar conclusion as that stated above might hold.

One other general observation of significance is that neither ethnicity (in an abstract sense) or religious identification appear to have a clear differentiating impact on religious participation or orientation variables: for instance, compare the two Hispanic minorities both of which are heavily Roman Catholic, or, conversely, note the similarities between E. T. Whites (Mixed Protestant) and S. T. Mexican Americans (Roman Catholics).

I will not redundantly repeat the intergroup patterns of similarity and difference obvious to anyone willing to examine Table 4 for a few minutes -- the reader can serve his or her own desires in this regard. "I got what I came for" and, at any rate, the paper is becoming too long for its purpose. I would like to invest the remainder of my time in this effort discussing the interpretation of these comparative findings and developing some propositions about the variable significance of religion for rural youth.

Table 4. Summary Comparison of Findings Across All Ethnic Types of Youth Studied on Religious Attributes and the Social Significance of These

Religious Attributes and Social Impacts	Northern Taos Co. - (Sp. Amers.)	South Texas (Mex. Amers.)	East Texas (Blacks)	East Texas (Whites)	Eastern Holmes Co. (Whites)
Church Membership:	R. Catholic	R. Catholic	Baptist	Mixed (Baptist)	Amish or Mennonite
Church Patricipation:					
Youth	Very Low	Polarized	Polarized (Most High)	Polarized	Rel. High
Youth-Parent	P > Y	Y > P	Y > P	Y > P	Equal
Religious Orients:					
Rel. Self-Image	Not Rel.	Polarized	Polarized	Polarized	Very Rel.
Rel. Valuation	Low	Mod. High	Polarized	Polarized	High
Rel. as Social Impediment	? (Probably Not)	No	No	No	? (Maybe)
Impact of Rel. on Youths' Community Life:					
General	Low	?	? (Probably Yes)	?	+ High -
Age-Peer Assocs.	None	?	?	?	Rel. High
Family Relations	None	?	?	?	High
Impact of Rel. on Moral Norms:	None	?	?	?	High

DISCUSSION

DIMENSIONS OF VARIABILITY ON RELIGIOUS ATTRIBUTES

Our sensitivity to be cautious about ignoring intraclass or intraunit variability when attempting to generalize about group or categorical differences can best be served by treating these two perspectives toward variability together. The findings clearly lead to the inference that there were substantial differences among the five groupings of youth involved in these three studies. At the highest level of abstraction these differences in terms of a notion of "religiosity" (positive vs. neutral to negative orientation) might be summarized visually as described in Figure 1. While one might quibble about the relative placement of the Texas groupings, the location of them in general relative to each of the other two would be hard to refute within the context of the findings produced here. Let us examine what is involved in this gross, abstract unit comparison we have just drawn. An interesting insight can be obtained if we do this by asserting that intragroup variability on religiosity can be viewed as a property of these youth units. Comparing them on this variable attribute produces a conclusion described in Figure 2. Note the two polar extremes in reference to "low" and "high" religiosity exhibit similarity on this attribute, which clearly differentiates them from the three Texas ethnic groupings. Why is this so and what does it mean? Several explanations can be given for this. Perhaps, it can be explained by the differing methodologies utilized for the Texas study as compared with the other two. This is possible, particularly since the Texas survey embraced several counties in both east and south Texas while both the others were restricted to just one relatively homogeneous part of a single county. Assuming that the explanation doesn't rest in the varying methodologies

Figure 1. Religiosity of Five Groupings of Rural Youth Studied

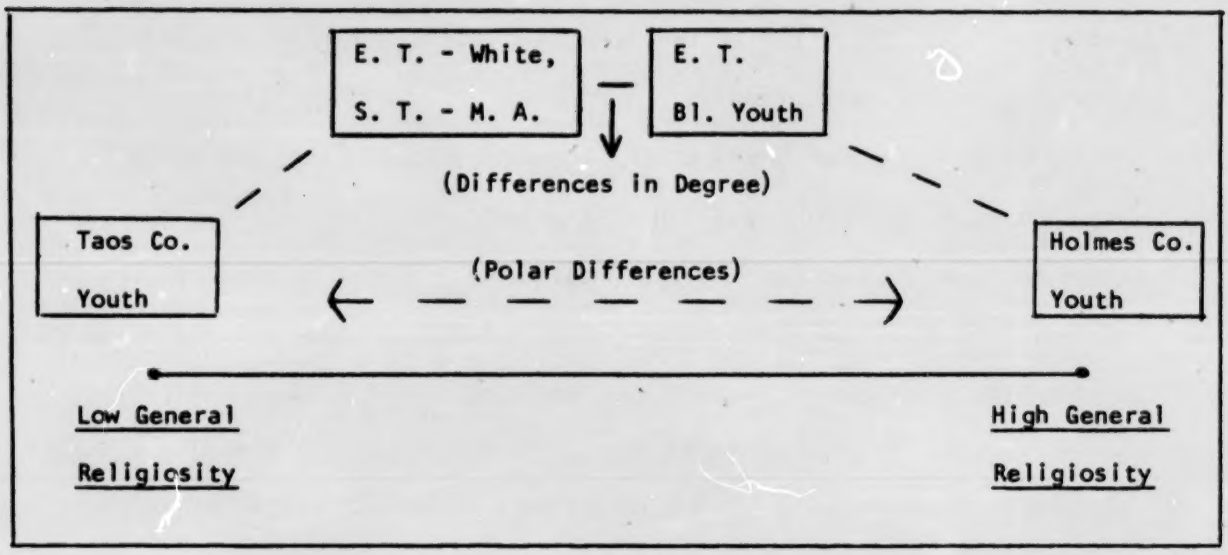
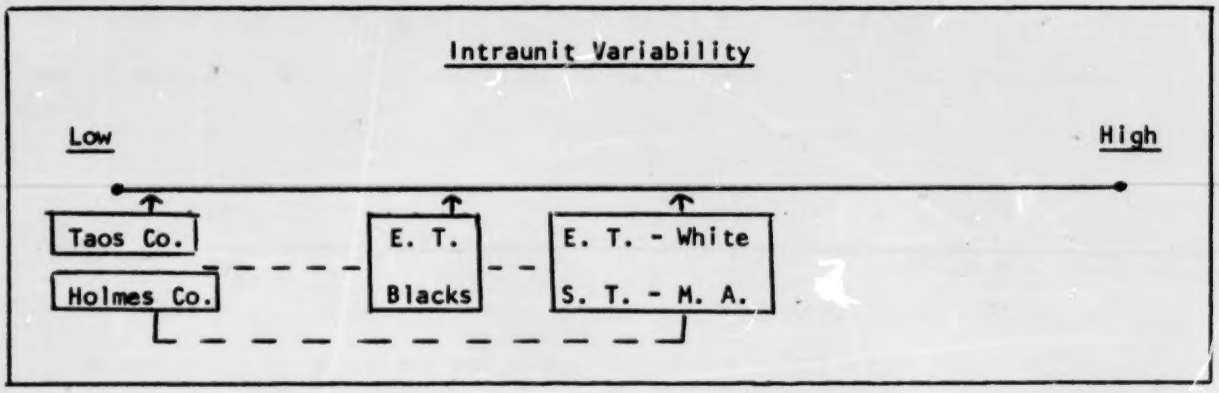


Figure 2. Comparison of Five Groupings of Youth On Intraunit Variability - General Religiosity



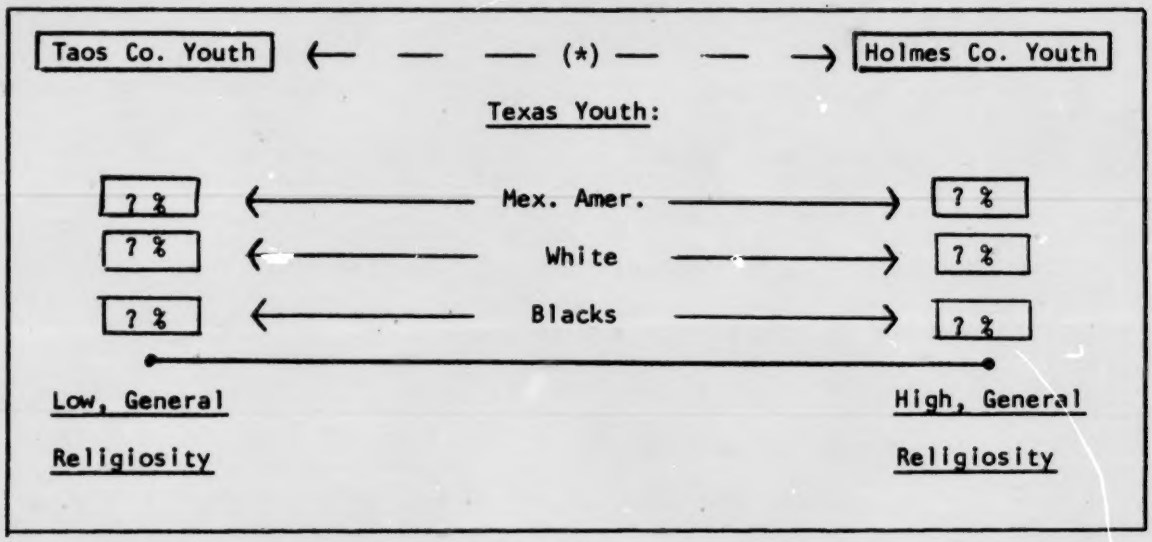
(I am inclined to believe that it doesn't entirely) it might be that our method of inference is inappropriate for some reason, or, that in fact the conclusion is valid. I prefer the later possibility, but, with what I feel is some necessary elaboration.

If we dig into the nature of the intraclass variability exhibited among the Texas groupings (see Table 3) we will note that this variability tended to occur in terms of a dichotomous pattern - what we have previously labeled, "polarization" (see Table 4). In other words, for all three Texas groupings in reference to several key variables (participation, valuation, self-image) the unit tended to be divided into substantial oppossing segments relative to religiosity : a substantial part of each of these three groupings were similar to Taos County youth, while at the same time another part (usually larger than the first) was similar to Holmes Co. youth. Therefore, a more accurate notion of intergroup variation can be obtained with this understanding of intragroup variability than one achieved without it (as presented in Figure 1). This new and better interpretation is presented visually in Figure 3. The significance of this new interpretation is that we are not now viewing the three Texas ethnic groupings as units located at some intermediate position between the polar approximations on a continium of general religiosity. To do so is clearly a case of reification - a perversion of factual reality - that obstructs rather than aids understanding.

Substantively what does this all mean. My interpretation can be summarized in the following statements:

(1) Youth tend to fall into polar extreme positions in reference to religious participation and orientation - positive or neutral (to negative).

Figure 3. Reformulation of "Figure 1" Taking Into Consideration Understanding of Intraunit Variability on Religiosity



* Some polar opposite cases exist in both groupings.

(2) Youth in any given community may be divided in varying proportions between these polar positions, ranging from relative homogeneity in reference to either polar extreme to more or less equal division between them.

(3) Ethnicity in a general or abstract sense ("minority" vs. "majority", or, "Black" vs. "White") does not provide a good explanation for patterning of this potential variability

(4) Locality (and, ethnicity) in a very specific sense does embrace in some way the explanatory elements for the patterning of this variability.

(5) Within a given locality--

a. Gender will influence the patterning of this variability - always more girls than boys will have + religiosity.

b. Ethnic variability may influence this patterned variability (i.e., Blacks vs. Whites in E. T.)

c. Church membership may influence this patterned variability (i.e., Amish in Holmes Co.)

In closing this discussion one thing can be concluded for certain, inclusive, social categorization in terms of either ethnicity or church affiliation does not provide a good, general basis for explanation of variability in religious participation and orientations. It appears that productive explanation lies in attributes of the social-cultural context of localities or areas and the consequences of these contexts on structuring social norms and patterns of interaction. True, some of these patterns may be widespread, as appears to be the case in reference to gender (i.e., "sex-roles"); however, it is probable that many are not (i.e., the unique organization and locally specific nature of the Amish "church").

THE VARYING SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION

Regardless of the particular population studied religion will vary in its significance for the individuals included. At the same time, to the extent that religion varies as a social institution in the socio-cultural context of a locality or a social area (consisting of similar local communities) it can have a patterned variability in significance for and impact on youth as a whole. This is clearly evident in the conclusions I drew from the comparison of my Holmes County and Taos County observations.

In Taos Co. religion did not provide a general dimension of active social participation for young people -- they were not involved in the church in any sense other than a general social identity (i.e., being Roman Catholic). In my judgement this was due to the fact that the "Church" had consolidated and thus removed itself as a daily, active presence from the villages I studied. This in turn contributed to the current general lack of external (to the village) linkages experienced by youth in the social organization of their life experiences and, at the same time, helped produce atomization by kinship units within the villages.

Lacking involvement in the church and probably lacking knowledge about the religion they wear so lightly as a label (i.e., "Roman Catholic") it is not surprising that they do not perceive themselves as religious persons or that the rather conservative moral norms fostered by the church are not reflected very well in either their behavior or moral attitudes. What is surprising to me, is why the incongruent religious attributes of the youth and elders is not associated with a general pattern of adult-adolescent hostility and conflict. I found just the opposite to be generally true. Perhaps, the parents' expressed religiousity is to be interpreted as more paying homage to a valued past than to strong commitment to religious beliefs, norms, and values. I am not sure about this. But, I am

sure that in general there is more explicit positive feeling freely shared within families here than I have ever observed elsewhere.

The situation in Eastern Holmes Co. represents almost the extreme polar opposite from that noted above for Taos Co. Here churches (usually several) are active for long hours several days of the week in every small village and even in the countryside (usually at cross-roads) -- the landscape is literally sprinkled with them. And, this doesn't include the "physically invisible" churches of the Amish. Families participate in the church as total units and elders and youth alike sincerely view themselves as religious persons. Everyone will tell you that religion is the dominant institutional force in the area; exerting strong influence on politics, education, and alternative leisure activities. While clearly this heavy religious atmosphere has probable advantages for youth -- generally in an organization sense and in normative socialization -- it is not perceived as positive by them in terms of its impacts on their lives.

One gets the impression that the heavy emphasis on moral sanctioning has a smothering impact on youth that they rebel against. It is an apparent paradox that these youth almost universally indicated intrafamily hostilities centered around parents attempts to maintain rigid, narrow moral norms even though "they prayed together," while just the converse was true in Taos Co. From this general finding I began to hypothesize that a "heavy general religious atmosphere" could have negative consequences for youth. Certainly, they perceive this explicitly in terms of limited leisure alternatives and heavy informal normative sanctioning in interpersonal relations. High religiosity in this case tends to heighten group boundaries and hostilities and interpersonal hostilities. In the end, I intuitively felt that this pervasive high religiosity was the basic element explaining the young people's almost universal craving to "leave this place and never come back." In Taos Co. in contrast, the

youth feel relatively free (albeit generally bored and restricted geographically) and, although most want to migrate out ("at least for a while"), they don't exhibit strong negative feelings about their home places; in fact, they appear to have genuine fondness for them.

The religious activity and orientations of the Holmes Co. youth appear to be associated with less involvement in patterns of behavior normally viewed as deviant -- girls getting in trouble, smoking pot, and early drinking -- than is apparently the case in Taos Co. From an adult point of view this can be viewed as a positive impact of high religiosity as an attribute of the community. At the same time, from the perspective of youth in either area not all of these activities would be viewed as equally bad, or even bad at all. For instance, drinking is apparently viewed as normal behavior and is widespread among youth in both areas, even though it is not available for sale in Holmes Co.

Unfortunately, I do not have the information on my Texas youth populations to contribute to this part of the comparative analysis. For the present I assume they would generally fall between the two extremes described above. This seems a reasonable guess since on the average they fall between the Taos Co. and Holmes Co. situations in reference to the level of general religiosity exhibited by youth in reference to church participation and religious orientations. Within the next year I intend to replicate the Taos Co. - Holmes Co. type of study in East and South Texas to find out whether or not this is so.

What can we conclude from these comparative findings obtained for the most part from the two interpretive studies? I am listing below a number of conclusions I am stating in a bold and general way so that they might provoke debate and possibly stir some of you to challenge them in future research. These are listed in the order of their level of abstraction -- from most abstract to most specific as follows:

(1) Religious attributes of the rural community and its members will impact significantly on the life experience of rural youth.

(2) Strong, pervasive religiosity can have both negative and positive consequences for rural youth.

   a. From the perspective of the subjective, felt needs of youth in general it will have negative consequences; although these may not be perceived by the youth as such.

   b. From the perspective of parents it will probably be perceived as having generally positive consequences.

(3) A lack of positive religiosity on the part of rural youth has latent negative consequences for them, which is not perceived by them or their parents.

(4) An apparent "Paradox" -- high levels of compatability of youth and their parents on level of religiosity can produce stress in parent-youth relations and, conversely, high levels of incongruence between level of religiosity of parent and youth does not produce family stress.

(5) Pervasive community religiosity when coupled with a heavy, restrictive normative climate and extreme, negative informal sanctioning can produce the following specific consequences:

   a. General stress and hostility among elders and youth in the community.

   b. Heavy-handed, restrictive attempts on the part of parents to control their youths' behavior defined as having "moral" significance.

   c. Negatively influence the quality of shared, positive affect ("love") within the family.

   d. High levels of youth dissatisfaction with the local community and, derivatively, a strong desire to move out of it <u>permanently</u>.

   e. Unhappy young people who will have a tendency to develop a pattern of escaping in the evenings and weekends given any opportunity to do so.

   f. A lower level of youth behavior locally defined as morally deviant, at least, within the confines of the local community.

   g. A higher probability for youth to have more organizational connections to others both inside and outside the local area.

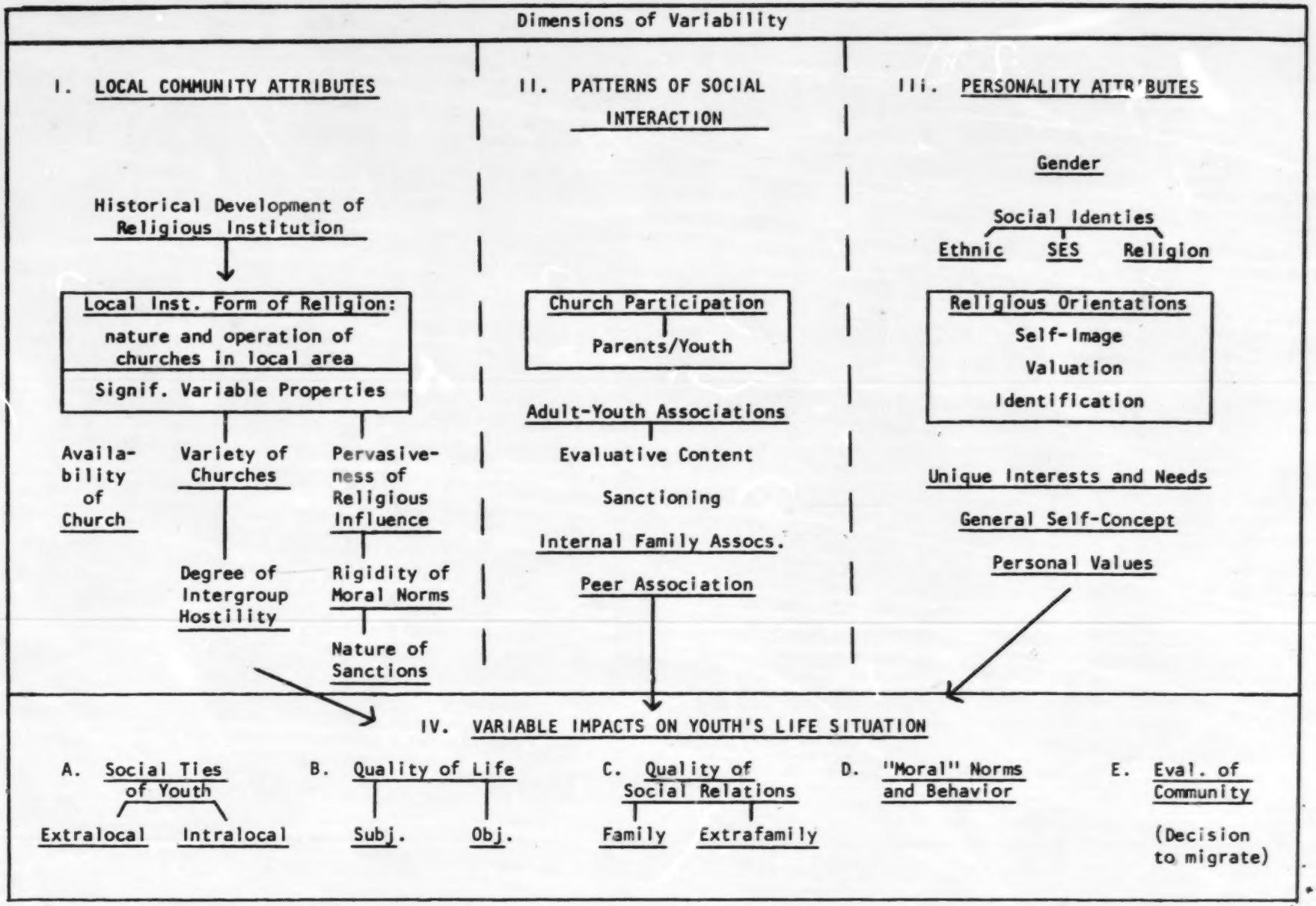
(6) Low religiosity exhibited on the part of youth in general within a community will tend to produce a converse set of social consequences to those specified above under "Conclusion # 5".

A very general conclusion that can be inferred from the more specific ones listed above is that pervasive high religiosity at the community level has on balance generally negative impacts on youth relative to their subjectively defined notions of quality of life (i.e., "a good life experience"). Whether this is a generally valid conclusion applicable to the rural U.S. is open to question. However, it is certainly a question worth seeking answers to. Personally, I suspect it may not be. Our problem lies in the severe limitations of the scope of observation utilized to inductively derive these abstract propositions -- the reliance on two extreme groupings, and only two. This is why I am eager to replicate this kind of study in reference to the 3 Texas ethnic groups described earlier. The fact that these are already known to exhibit more variability than the two ethnic groupings contrasted here, promises a potential for relatively reasonable initial tests of the general validity of the speculative propositions offered above.

A "Grounded Theory" of the Significance of Religion for Rural Youth

I see a good possibility for a socially relevant, humanistically oriented, fruitful "grounded theoretical frame" for sociological study to evolve out of this line of research activity (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).[7] I have taken the initial step in moving toward such a theoretical system by sketching the relevant conceptual elements and their probable causal connections, Figure 4. This is an inductively derived construction guided by the inferences I made from the findings overviewed in this paper. This theoretical sketch is rough: it needs considerable refinement both in delineating more clearly the key

Figure 4. An Empirically Grounded Theoretical Sketch of Factors Influencing The Variable Significance of Religion For Rural Youth



conceptual elements involved and in terms of specifying more precisely the implied hypothesized causal linkages. At the same time, it does provide a conceptual guide and a source of initial propostitions that should prove fruitful in planning new research initiatives in this problem area.

Obviously, I am excited about the prospects of extending the scope of this line of investigation. If any of you are similarly affected, let's communicate so we can develop data that fosters comparability that will facilitate the accumulative power of our collective efforts to achieve a general understanding of rural youth and their life circumstances. At the very least, I implore you to examine explicitly the assumptions you are making, have made, or will make about the potential utility of religious attributes before you plan and implement your next research project. The one thing that my research has made me absolutely sure of is that religion, in is absence or presence, will have significance for the life experience of rural youth.

FOOTNOTES

1. I have been involved over the years in a large number of seminars, formal meeting sessions, and informal "bull" sessions where this topic was the principal focus of discussion and I have been involved in a large number of written conceptual and empirical research attempts to address this issue (i.e., "rural-urban" differences). In the first place, it is difficult to achieve consensus on what the term "rural" should conceptually specify. Secondly, if this is done (the fewer the people involved the easier it is to do) and regradless of how it is done, one will always observe in any distribution of measured attributes considerable, if not dramatic, intraclass variability among those viewed as rural. This is so whether or not "rural" is viewed as generally differing from "urban". On the other hand, magnitude of rural-urban differences is problematic -- sometimes substantial, sometimes not. I have evolved a hypothesis that this variability in rural-urban difference is at least partially structured in terms of "attitudinal" as oppossed to "behavioral patterns" and contextual type of phenomena: rural-urban differences are more likely to be substantial on the later than on the former as a general rule.

2. My research in Texas involving rural-urban and multiethnic comparisons of youth invariably demonstrates more substantial <u>intragroup</u> than intergroup variability on a variety of attitudinal variables, particularly status projections. On the other hand, research I have been involved with on Black women's orientations toward race relations demonstrates both substantial rural-urban differences and intraclass variability.

3. Our Texas findings and comparable findings of other researchers in the South and Southwest support the notion that status aspirations and expectations of rural youth from various ethnic groups are generally similar in terms of "status levels" but that there are particular qualitative patterns of difference

sometimes evident (i.e., specific desired jobs). Recent findings on patterns of historical change in occupational and educational status projections of rural youth indicate that differences by ethnic type are diminishing. This should lead one to be cautious about assuming that ethnic differentials established for any universe at any particular point in time will maintain at later points in time -- social phenomena, particularly social orientations of people, are dynamic phenomena. Another point should be made here, our usual operations for delineating "ethnic groups" for survey research purposes are based on subjective or objective attributes of individuals and results in artificially structured entities (i.e., categories) rather than entities differentiated in terms of organized relationships (internally or externally). In other words, the units the researcher ends up comparing are normally not groups in the sense of internally organized entities but rather more or less heterogeneous categories of people grouped together on the basis of some selected common attribute or attributes deemed to be socially significant. Clearly, such things should not be assumed to be organized social units. Yet, I am afraid we often unconciously ignore this fact and begin thinking of them and writing about them as if they were "real" groups.

4. In all honesty I can not claim that my review of the literature in this regard was as inclusive as a good, thorough scholar might like. Consequently, I would be grateful for the reader's help in locating any exception to this generalization I have stated.

5. The papers cited previously as sources of information for my Taos County and Holmes County studies provide much detail on my methods, the study areas, and the study populations. These will be sent on request.

6. An example of a problem of comparability between the "survey method" obtained information and that obtained from the "ethnomethodological" approach is the indicator used for religious valuation. The Texas survey provides only one narrow indicator for this -- the importance of religion as an attribute of a prospective marital partner. The multifaceted, wholistic ethnomethodological studies involve an array of numerous and varied indicators leading up to the judgement of relative social valuation of religion both at the individual and aggregate levels. Conversely, the "survey" as used in Texas might have provided a more accurate idea of actual variability in religious identification than the other methodological pattern, because it was more likely to have covered a wider range of variability through the larger number of subjects involved in it. In fact, Clark Knowlton (1977) indicates that I may have missed some significant and interesting secretive, sect type religious activity among the Spanish Americans of Northern Taos Co. Although I think my good friend and "notorious" colleague, Clark, to be mistaken in this regard -- at least, in reference to the 3 villages I studied -- there is a danger in the way I used the "ethnomethodological" field procedure (too short a period of time, not having use of Spanish) in having missed significant elements of the existing reality.

7. The foremost proponents of a "grounded theory" approach for sociological knowledge development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) appear to feel that not only "theories" but even singular conceptual elements pop-up out of ongoing research into the cognitive view of the analyst. I consider this an extreme view -- one that fails to recognize the distinction between "initial orienting conceptual frame" that points to what needs to be observed and formalized systems of concepts bound together in terms of propositional statements (i,e., theory). It is impossible for me to see how one can observe without some notion of what

needs to be observed -- granted one might find it desireable to modify or even junk some of these notions as the observation proceeds.

At any rate, in this case I started my observation with a clear, rather broad set of orienting concepts about the social reality of the lives of rural youth, but, without any specific, coherent theoretical perspective. Generally speaking, I see social reality as unevenly organized in variable ways. My objective was to search out how the life experience of rural youth varied in its social organization and what difference this made for their own subjectively defined quality of life and social aspirations. Notions of "varying levels of social organization" of "social conflict", of "values" and "norms", of "institutional structures" of a potential "discontinuity between perceptions and objective reality", of "age and gender status-roles", and of "ethnic boundaries" are only a few of the hundreds of conceptual ideas that I used in filtering the infinitely possible variable aspects of existing social reality to help make sense of it. At the same time, the theoretical scheme roughly sketched in Figure 4 clearly evolved after the observations were made and analyzed. In this sense the theory is grounded: it evolved inductively from specific sets of findings through comparative analysis.

By the way, my experience in developing this grounded sketch leads me to strongly support the Glaser and Strauss notion that "qualitative" research plays a key role in the development of grounded theory and that there is no inherent reason why a combination of quantitative and qualitative observations can not be utilized in conjunction with each other in producing such a theory.

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